

# *Historic Gloucester*

Newsletter of the

**GLOUCESTER HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY**

[Www.gloucesterhistory.com](http://www.gloucesterhistory.com)

VOLUME 12, NO 1

Spring 2011



*Cummings Bridge aka Bingham's Bridge in 1896*

**Flyer for Annual General Meeting ..... 3**

**The Curious Tale of Bingham’s Bridge..... Glenn Clark 4**

**Women’s Institutes of Gloucester Township ..... Robert Sérre 8**

**Membership Form..... 10**

THE GLOUCESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
 IS HAPPY TO ANNOUNCE  
 THAT ITS HISTORY ROOM WILL AGAIN BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC  
 EACH THURSDAY FROM 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M.  
 BETWEEN MAY 5 AND OCTOBER 27, 2011,  
 OR BY APPOINTMENT

LOCATION: 4550B BANK STREET (AT LEITRIM ROAD)

FOR MORE INFORMATON  
 Contact Robert Serré at 613-749-0607 // bob.rosealine@gmail.com

**Cover Photo:**

*Cummings Bridge, aka Bingham’s Bridge, in 1896. Cummings Island and the residence of Robert Cummings is on the right and Janeville is in the background.*

*- Mrs. John Beverley MacLaughlin / Library and Archives Canada / C-001011*

**Historic Gloucester** is published by The Gloucester Historical Society. It is intended as a Newsletter to members of the Society to provide interesting articles on Gloucester’s past and to keep them informed of new acquisitions by the Museum, publications available, upcoming events and other items of general interest. Comments and suggestions regarding the Newsletter are always welcome.



*Gloucester Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the City of Ottawa.*

**The Gloucester Historical Society**  
**presents a lecture on**  
**the book titled “Perseverance, Pranks & Pride”**  
**Experiences growing up or teaching in a one room**  
**school house.**

**by author Joy Forbes**

**Sunday, April 17, 2011 at 2:00 p.m.**

**The Gloucester South Seniors’ Centre,  
4550 Bank Street (just south of Leitrim  
Rd.), Gloucester**

Free Admission and Parking



The Annual General Meeting will be held this day and light refreshments will be served.

**Board of Directors  
2010-2011**

President: Robert Serré  
Past President: Mary Boyd  
Vice-President  
and Webmaster: Glenn Clark  
Treasurer: Flo McRostie  
Recording Sec: Shirley McCooeye  
Newsletter Editor: Joan Scott

Directors: Bob Kemp  
Jean-Marc Jossinet  
Aline Mageau  
Mary Patterson  
Graham Ritchie

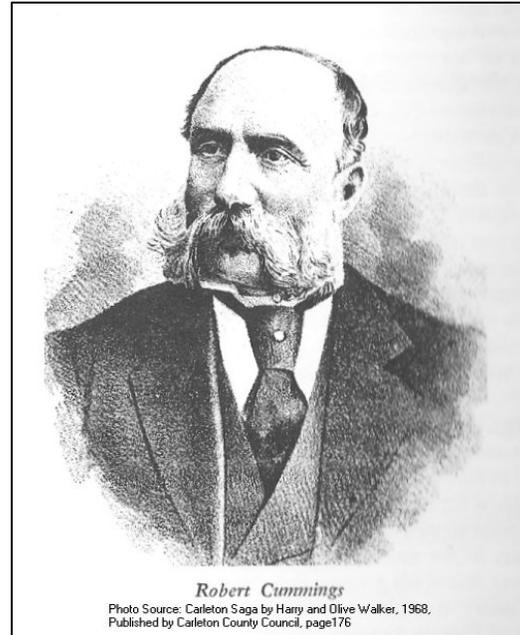
## The Curious Tale of Bingham's Bridge

By Glenn Clark

Most readers may wonder where in the world is Bingham's Bridge. This is a story long forgotten. Surprisingly, it is not an obscure location but much better known as Cummings Bridge for the past 180 years.

Cummings Bridge has been an important link over the Rideau River between Ottawa and Gloucester since 1837 when a meeting was called for the citizens of Bytown to build the first bridge. Charles Cummings and his family moved to the island just south of the current bridge in 1840 [*Ottawa Citizen*, Feb. 22, 1922 p. 3]. The first bridge connected Rideau Street to King's Road, now Montreal Road via an island in the middle of the river and both were named after the Cummings family who were the only island residents. Until 1922, the bridge accessed the island where Charles and later son Robert Cummings operated a carriage works, flour mill and General Store [Walker]. The post office, also named after the bridge, was located there from 1879 until 1921. The postmistress was Mrs. Agnes Cummings, wife of Robert Cummings [Library and Archives Canada]. When the bridge was first rebuilt in 1865, it was named the new 'Rideau Bridge' [*Ottawa Citizen*, May 8, 1967 p.26] but known at least briefly during that era as the Sandy Hill Bridge [*Ottawa Citizen*, Aug. 18, 1865].

In 1889, Robert Cummings complained to Carleton County Council about the condition of the then wooden bridge and the risks of damage from flooding, and ice jams that might be made worse by the design of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Railway Bridge



Robert Cummings  
Photo Source: Carleton Saga by Harry and Olive Walker, 1968.  
Published by Carleton County Council, page176

downstream and a potential failure of the dam at Hog's Back upstream [*The Ottawa Daily Citizen* June 14, 1889 p.2]. Construction of a new iron bridge commenced on September 6, 1892 with Mr. Henry Smith and Mr. Viau being the contractors for the piers and abutments on the west and east spans respectively. The iron bridgework was constructed by the Peterborough Bridge Company. The bridge was 6 feet higher than its wooden predecessor and was 24 feet wide in addition to one 6 foot wide sidewalk on the north side. It was designed to withstand the worst Rideau River floods and ice jams. [*Ottawa Journal*, March 15, 1893]. The bridge opened for traffic on March 29, 1893 [*Ottawa Journal*, March 30, 1893] and was followed by an official opening ceremony on April 5, 1893.

Alderman Samuel Bingham, later Ottawa mayor in 1897 and 1898, provided personal security to begin construction of the bridge owing to the failure of getting ratepayer support on two previous occasions. As chairman of the Board of Works, Mr. Bingham was responsible for its successful

completion and many on City Council believed he deserved recognition by having the bridge named in his honour.



*Alderman Samuel Bingham*

On the day of its official inauguration, a luncheon was held at the Russell House hotel where 100 of the best known businessmen and officials of Ottawa and Carleton County gathered in celebration of the event. Unfortunately, the speeches contained some thinly veiled criticism as many considered the new bridge to be ugly and there were wishes for a straight bridge across the river bypassing the island. The decision concerning the design and route was a compromise as Carleton County officials and Robert Cummings were insistent that the bridge continue to travel across the island to provide access to Mr. Cummings' businesses. The resulting bridge ended up having odd angles, with a 'dog leg' on the island and a difficult turn after traveling a steep winding descent from Rideau Street. Even the island itself presented a problem as the road there was nothing more than muddy clay.

After the luncheon and speeches concluded, two electric streetcars decorated with flags and accompanied by Barrett's Brass Band took the officials down Rideau Street to the bridge where they were met by the fire brigade and a large crowd. The fire brigade then rushed across the bridge followed by the crowd, at which point the brigade turned around and rushed back. Farmer's wagons also joined in the confusion. During the hoopla, one or two people fell off the bridge into the icy water but were thankfully rescued. In order to bring some order to the event and to draw some of the crowd off the bridge, the brass band was sent ashore, but it continued to play even when the mayor attempted to make his speech. When the mayor was finally able to speak, he was urged by some of the aldermen to pronounce the opening of 'Bingham's Bridge'. The mayor refused to do so since he felt he had no authority and because the bridge crossed between Ottawa and Carleton County jurisdictions and the cost of the bridge was being shared. When those urgings failed, they encouraged Anglican Archdeacon Lauder to christen the bridge and when he did so, he announced that the western span would be called 'Bingham's Bridge' to the great dismay of the mayor, a lawyer, and many onlookers. With murmurs of dissatisfaction, the officials returned to the awaiting streetcars and traveled back to the Parliament Buildings. [*Ottawa Journal* April 6, 1893].

This is not where the story ends. On April 17, 1893, an Ottawa by-law was passed officially naming 'Bingham's Bridge' and on May 1<sup>st</sup>, a name plate was put up on a girder at the Ottawa end of the bridge. A couple of days later, a similar name plate was placed on the Gloucester end of the bridge. Within an hour, both were taken down and placed on the side of the bridge. At this point, the police were called and a crowd gathered

including Mr. Cummings, Alderman Bingham, and the county solicitor. Orders were given to put the name plates back up but when they were about to put the sign up again on the Gloucester side, county constable Harry Head ordered them to stop. They proceeded to erect the sign anyways. No sooner had this happened, one of Robert Cummings' workmen started removing the signs again and laid them face down on the bridge. At this point, a city official took the signs away from the scene fearing that they would be thrown in the river. Again, within a day or two the signs were posted on the bridge and county authorities responded by erecting a sign of their own on the Gloucester side declaring it 'Cummings Bridge' [*Ottawa Citizen*, June 8, 1935 p.2].

On May 5<sup>th</sup>, there were four signs on the bridge, with 'Bingham's Bridge' only appearing on the west end of the west span. As a compromise, it was suggested that neither 'Bingham's Bridge' nor 'Cummings Bridge' would be used but instead 'Rideau Bridge' [*Ottawa Journal*, May 5, 1893 p.7]. This fell on deaf ears. The following day, Mayor Olivier Durocher was quoted "I will go down to the bridge and have all the signs removed. This tomfoolery has gone far enough. It is making the city ridiculous in the eyes of the world. Neither city nor county corporation has the right to name the bridge. All the signs must come down." However, Alderman Henderson was prepared to appeal to the Lieutenant Governor in order to maintain the 'Bingham's Bridge' name [*Ottawa Journal*, May 6, 1893 p. 7]. Two days later, a group of county officials gathered at the bridge where they conferred and decided to remove all the signs. Mr. Cummings, also present, agreed as everybody knew it as 'Cummings Bridge' for the past fifty years. He also commented that as postmaster, he would send any letters addressed

to 'Bingham's Bridge' to the dead letter office. When the signs were taken down, again they were placed on the side of the bridge. Nobody from the city or the county had authority to put those signs up therefore they had been erected by trespassers and they belonged to no one. After they had all been taken down, it was suggested to return to the other side to see how the bridge appeared without the signs. But in that short time, the signs had all disappeared and bystanders made remarks suggesting that the signs had been thrown into the river [*Ottawa Journal*, May 8, 1893 p.1].

But it still did not end. Ottawa City Council was incensed that their wishes had not been followed and passed another motion ordering that new signs be put up. Furthermore, another motion was passed demanding that the county maintain both spans of the bridge. Mayor Durocher called it all a farce but was overruled on both matters [*Ottawa Journal*, June 6, 1893 p.5]. This latter approved motion was sent to the county which considered it at their June 12<sup>th</sup> meeting. This was accompanied by petitions from residents of Rideau Street and Gloucester asking that there be no change in the name of the bridge. The motion presented from the city still referred to 'Bingham's Bridge', which raised the ire of county council. As long as the city continued to refer to the bridge by that name, it would not consider any requests from the city in a favourable manner. Furthermore, any further signs placed on the bridge would be removed at once. Warden Kidd made serious accusations that city engineer Robert Surtees had ordered the 'Bingham's Bridge' name plates three weeks in advance of the inauguration [*Ottawa Journal*, June 13, 1893 p.8]. Over the next few days, an exchange of letters appeared in the *Ottawa Journal* denying and reaffirming the accusation [*Ottawa Journal*, June 14, 1893 p.8 and June 16, 1893

p.1]. Afterwards, county officials inspected the bridge and suggested that there were serious problems with the design of the west span, to which, an Ottawa alderman agreed. When they retired to Mr. Cummings residence on the island, Carleton County Warden Kidd commented that this all came about because some young men on City Council wanted to make a 'big show' during their first year in office. The county people, however, were not to be scared [*Ottawa Citizen*, June 15, 1935, p.2].

Despite all of this, the residents of Janeville and Gloucester had no ill will for Samuel Bingham and they recognized his accomplishment in successfully completing the bridge. It was simply felt that the Cummings family had such a longstanding affiliation with the location and the bridge and post office had so long been known by that name.

The 'Bingham Bridge' name quickly fell into obscurity, but it remained in Ottawa by-laws as the official name of the bridge. [*Ottawa Citizen* June 8, 1935 p.2]

On a sad note, a workman fell off the old wooden bridge as it was being dismantled and he was swept away under the ice to his death [*Ottawa Journal*, April 6, 1893].

Concerns had been expressed about how this 'ugly' bridge would remain a monument for 50 years, but the era of the automobile was soon approaching and the unsuitability of the bridge became apparent sooner than expected. The bridge was too narrow. The bridge had too many sharp turns. The bridge approach from Rideau Street was too steep. The bridge was not suitable for streetcars. By 1917, the bridge was already considered unsafe and a new bridge was costed [*Ottawa Citizen*, July 11, 1917 p.10].

In February 1922, a new reinforced concrete Cummings Bridge was opened by-passing the island [*Ottawa Citizen*, Feb. 22, 1922, p.5] and Mrs. Agnes Cummings was already dead the previous year. Robert Cummings had died in 1910 [Serré]. The city and Carleton County jointly purchased the island from the Cummings' heirs and the buildings and Bingham's Bridge' were demolished later that year, the east span prior to the ice breakup [*Ottawa Citizen*, Feb. 22, 1922, p.3]. Some displeasure was expressed that the price charged for the island by the Cummings family was excessive, but it was the price to be paid in order to bypass the island [*Ottawa Citizen*, Sept. 2, 1921, p.9]. The purchase price was \$30,000 [*Ottawa Citizen*, Dec. 10, 1985 p.C1].

So ended the important connection between Cummings Island and the community of Janeville by then known as Eastview. In December 1985, Vanier Mayor Gisèle Lalonde, attempted to 'repatriate' the island from the City of Ottawa for one dollar with the idea of building an open-air bandstand and connecting the island to Vanier by a foot bridge [*Ottawa Citizen*, Dec. 10, 1985 p.C1].

Today, stone work on Cummings Island continues to mark where Bingham's Bridge used to connect. In addition, on the west side, Rideau Place still takes you down the slope from Rideau Street to where you would have driven onto the west span of the old bridge.

The new Cummings Bridge included streetcar tracks intended to connect Eastview to Ottawa [*Ottawa Citizen*, Oct. 6, 1921 p.9] but this fell into considerable controversy later in the 1920s. In the end, the Ottawa Electric Railway Company was unable to secure an agreement with Eastview town council and the Eastview Bus Company was

contracted to provide transit service for the area instead. That company continued in operation until December 1950 when the Ottawa Transportation Commission took over its bus routes. [*Ottawa Citizen*, Jan. 2, 1954, p.9]

Clark, Glenn - A Historical Time Line for the Township of Gloucester <http://www.gloucesterhistory.com/history.html>

Library and Archives Canada Post Office and Postmaster Index <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/databases/post-offices/001001-100.01-e.php>

Serré, Robert – Pioneer Families of Janeville (Gloucester Township) 2008

Walker, Harry & Olive - Carleton Saga Page 194, 1968.

---

## Women's Institutes of Gloucester Township

by Robert Serré

The first Women's Institute was founded on 19 February 1897 by Mrs. Adelaide Hoodless of Hamilton, in the village of Stoney Creek, Saltfleet Township, Wentworth County, Ontario. Farmers' Institute had existed since 1884, under the auspices of the provincial Department of Agriculture, inspiring Mrs. Hoodless to declare that if men felt the need for a farmers' organization, then an Institute for women would be equally helpful.

Mrs. Hoodless, née Adelaide Sophia Hunter, was born in February 1857 on a farm near St. George, Brant County, Canada West, and married John Hoodless in September

1881. She became an educational reformer, and was greatly assisted in her efforts by Erland Lee and his wife, Janet Chisholm Lee.

Laura Rose, an early organizer within the Women's Institute movement, suggested "For Home and Country" as its motto, which was chosen in 1902. She was born in Georgetown, Ontario, and married W.F. Stephen in 1911. They lived in Huntingdon, Quebec for a few years before moving to Ottawa.

In 1903, there were 53 Women's Institutes in Ontario. By 1908, the figure had reached 522, with a membership of approximately 14,000. In 1919, there were 900 Institutes in Ontario. From the very beginning, Women's Institutes represented a movement of rural women, their main purpose being to raise the standard of homemaking. The tradition in Ontario has been to hold regular monthly meetings, the membership fee being set initially at 25 cents. Typically, meetings began with the Women's Institute Ode, sung to the tune of *Auld Lang Syne*. The membership figures for Women's Institutes in Ontario reached 39,000 in 1948, and by 1953 Ontario had more than 1,500 Women's Institutes, with a total membership exceeding 45,000.

In 1913, there were Women's Institutes in each of Canada's nine provinces. Six years later, provincial representatives met in Winnipeg to form the Federated Women's Institutes of Canada. The movement also spread to the United States and other parts of the world. In 1933, in Stockholm, Sweden, the Associated Country Women of the World was formed; it was formally separated from the International Council of Women.

The Ontario Women's Institutes decided, in 1933, to publish a newspaper in a four-page format measuring ten by fourteen

inches. It was called *Home and Country*, and the first issue, dated May 1933, appeared in Toronto. Initially, it was a monthly, but in January 1936, it became a quarterly.

Tweedsmuir Histories are perhaps the single most familiar contribution associated with Women's Institutes. They were launched officially in 1947 to mark the 50th anniversary of the movement, and consisted of a scrapbook, or a more elaborate series of volumes, dedicated to the history of a village or a settlement area. They were named after Lord Tweedsmuir, born John Buchan in Scotland in 1875, and appointed governor general of Canada from 1935 to 1940. Lady Tweedsmuir had already suggested that local history books be kept by Women's Institutes in Ontario, as the Women's Institutes in England did, and she was therefore delighted to approve the idea of local history books named after her husband, who had died in Montreal in 1940. Local curators were charged with keeping and displaying the Tweedsmuir books according to practical guidelines, and a first Tweedsmuir Handbook was released by Mrs. R.C. Walker in 1962. The History Room of the Gloucester Historical Society holds copies of several Tweedsmuir Histories.

An alphabetical listing of Ontario branches covering the period 1897 to 1995 includes a dozen Women's Institutes in the former Township of Gloucester, now part of Ottawa. The first is the **Bowesville Women's Institute**, started in 1914 and disbanded in 1938, but reorganized in 1943 and disbanded again in 1951. The **Carlsbad Springs Women's Institute** was organized on 2 May 1934 by Laura Rose Stephen, and Miss Carrie Elliott was the first president. Members who were unable to pay the fee remained members, but were not eligible to vote. In January 1963, there was a discussion about

changing the name from Carlsbad Springs Women's Institute to **Ramsayville Women's Institute**, and the change was made in 1965. The fee had been increased to one dollar in 1964, and in 1975-76 it was raised to a dollar and a half. This Institute was still active in 1995.

Next on the list was the **Cedardale Women's Institute**, which started in 1959 and disbanded in 1968. The **Glen Ogilvie Women's Institute** was organized at a meeting held in the home of Mrs. Hugh Blair on 19 October 1919. Mrs. Cyrus Craig was elected first president, and meetings were held on the second Wednesday of each month. This Institute was disbanded in 1990. The **Gloucester Glen Women's Institute** was organized at a meeting held on 11 November 1952 by several women who had been members of the Bowesville Women's Institute. The first president was Miss Florence Hardy. This Institute was disbanded in 1987. The **Hawthorne Women's Institute** was formed on 27 May 1921, and Mrs. M.C. McLean served as its first president. The first meeting opened with the singing of the Institute Ode, followed by the Lord's Prayer repeated in unison, and it closed with God Save the King. Meetings were held on the first Thursday of each month, and there were 37 members for the year 1921.

The **Hurdman's Bridge Women's Institute** was established in 1925, and it was disbanded in 1965. The **Leitrim Women's Institute** was organized on 15 August 1919 at a meeting held in the Leitrim schoolhouse. Mrs. E.F. Ritchie, wife of David Ritchie, was elected first president. Meetings were held on the third Wednesday of each month, with an average attendance of eleven members. This Institute was still active in 1995. The **Overbrook Women's Institute** started in 1930, and was disbanded in 1938. The **Quarries**

**Women’s Institute** was formed in 1936, and was disbanded in 1941. The **Ridge Women’s Institute** was organized by members of the Borthwick Ridge community in 1936, and disbanded in 1966. In 1945, the president of this Institute was Mrs. John Whyte. The **Ridgemont Women’s Institute** was established in 1946, and was disbanded in 1953.

Bibliography

Ambrose, Linda McGuire. “For Home and Country, the Centennial History of the Women’s Institutes in Ontario.” Erin, Ontario, Boston Mills Press, 1996, 256 pages.  
Anon, “Women’s Institutes,” *Gloucester Roots*, ed. by Lois Kemp. Gloucester, Elokem Enterprises Ltd., 1991, page 84.  
Dryden, Jean E., “Federated Women’s Institutes of Canada,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Volume 1, 1985, page 622.  
Stamp, Robert M., “Adelaide Hoodless,” *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Volume 1, 1985,



**Logo: Federated Women’s Institutes of Ontario.**

**IF YOU HAVE NOT YET RENEWED YOUR MEMBERSHIP, OR IF YOU WISH TO BECOME A NEW MEMBER, PLEASE COMPLETE THE FORM BELOW AND SEND IT IN WITH YOUR CHEQUE.**

**Membership Form—Gloucester Historical Society/Société historique de Gloucester**

Membership/Adhésion 2010 - \$15.00 for one year..... \$100.00 for life membership.....

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ PROV \_\_\_\_\_ POSTAL CODE \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: Gloucester Historical Society  
4550B Bank Street,  
Gloucester, Ontario  
K1T 3W6